

Principal: Lesley Welsh



22 January 2021

Dear Parent / Carer

Coronavirus Update

I hope this finds you and your family safe and well during these challenging times. As we have now completed three weeks of the national lockdown, I wanted to update you on a number of issues.

Since the beginning of the spring term, we have been running our school curriculum through remote learning. The expectations on schools to provide their normal timetable using online methods are very clear and students are expected to be online completing their regular lessons during the school day. In line with DfE expectations published in the 'Restricting attendance during the national lockdown: school' guidance, we have a duty to check whether students are engaging with their work, and then work with families to rapidly identify effective solutions where engagement is a concern. This week we sent a first group of emails which were designed to make families aware of their child's progress over the previous week; however I do appreciate that there were teething problems with the system and we will continually refine our processes over the coming days to provide as much information as possible to facilitate discussions at home. I understand how challenging it is to balance home and school life at this time and I appreciate that there are many pressures on families during the national lockdown. I can assure you that our emails are solely designed to allow for more informed conversations and to help us all work together so that children can make progress at this time. Some key themes have emerged in our conversations over the last few days:

- Students should be online for each of their timetabled lessons, logging into the Google Classroom at the start of each period as work and messages from teachers are scheduled to be released throughout the school day
- Students should check the 'Stream' in the Google Classroom as well as the 'Classwork' tab as some teachers direct students to a different site for the lesson or give instructions about a Google Meet in the stream only
- Students need to pay particular attention to how they submit their work. We are aware that some students have completed tasks but not handed them in correctly meaning that the teacher cannot log their completion. If a task has been set as an assignment, you should see a grey 'TURN IN' icon next to the blue 'SHARE' box on Google. Press 'TURN IN' to hand work in
- If teachers have asked for work to be completed in a different way, students need to follow those instructions – for example, if teachers set an assignment on SAM Learning, students should complete this by the deadline given.

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You can find more information about online learning, along with some useful videos to support students, here: http://georgepindarschool.org/online_learning/ If you have any queries about online learning, passwords, devices or need some additional support, please email news@gps.hlt.academy so that we can direct your query to the correct person.

For those families in receipt of Free School Meals, the national voucher system has now gone live and you should have received an email containing a 16-digit code which can be inputted to www.freeschoolmeals.co.uk and turned into a voucher for a number of supermarkets. If you have any queries about Free School Meals, please email fsm@gps.hlt.academy for support.

School remains open for the families of critical workers and vulnerable children who cannot be safely left at home. It is vital that families book a place by Friday of the previous week to guarantee adequate staffing levels and for safeguarding purposes using the Google Form which has been sent out by email to those families who have informed us that they require this provision. If you have a query about this provision, please contact news@gps.hlt.academy

This remains a very challenging time for all of us and we should not underestimate the impact of this pandemic and the current lockdown on us. There are many support mechanisms available, not least talking to family and friends. Families can also find a variety of support mechanisms here: <http://georgepindarschool.org/stress-and-mental-health/>

I would like to thank you for your support at this difficult time. I, like you, look forward to the day when students can safely return to school and learn together with their peers and teachers. In the meantime, thank you for supporting your children to do their very best and please keep in touch with school if you have concerns; we are here for you.

Yours sincerely

Lesley Welsh
Principal